DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 264 997 RC 015 566

AUTHOR McCune, Allen
TITLE Effective Use of the ACT Test in a Small, Rural High School.
PUB DATE Dec 85
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Guidance; Grade 11; *Guidance Programs; High Schools; *High School Seniors; Program Descriptions; *Program Implementation; Rural Education; *Small Schools; *Testing Programs; Vocational Interests
IDENTIFIERS *American College Testing Program; *Halstead High School KS; Kansas

ABSTRACT

Systematic activities of the guidance program at the Halstead, Kansas high school--enrollment 215--are used to illustrate what a small rural school can do to help students register and prepare for the ACT (American College Testing Program) and use test results to plan their educational futures. Halstead students' ACT scores consistently exceed state and national averages and the program results in increased self-knowledge, better career information and guidance, and more realistic and attainable career goals for students. Preparation for the test begins in August with mailing a calendar to parents of seniors emphasizing ACT administration dates, the first administration being in October. Dissemination of information about the test to faculty and students, individual conferences with each senior, and daily and weekly bulletin reminders precede test dates. When test results are received, conferences are held with each student and scores mailed to parents with invitations to individual parent conferences. During February and March conferences are held with seniors who have not taken the test and test information is disseminated to juniors and their parents, with juniors encouraged to take the test in April. The April ACT results are followed up with conferences and group summaries are compared to national and state averages before the school year ends. (LFL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED264997

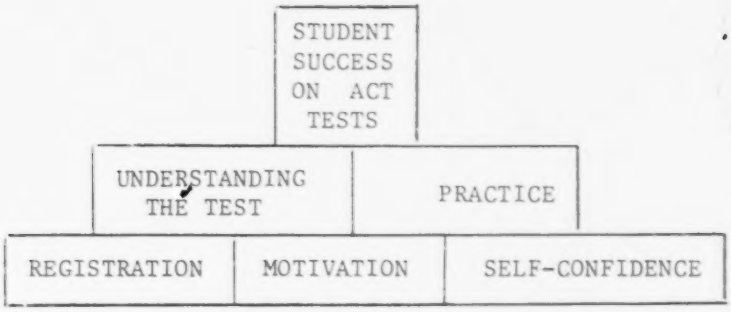
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
✓ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Dr. Allen McCune
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EFFECTIVE USE OF THE ACT TEST IN A SMALL, RURAL HIGH SCHOOL

Dr. Allen McCune
Halstead, Kansas
12-85

RC015566



EFFECTIVE USE OF THE ACT TEST IN A SMALL, RURAL HIGH SCHOOL

USD #440, Halstead, Kansas, has an enrollment of slightly over 700 in grades K-12. Halstead High School has an enrollment of 215 students in grades 9-12. Student ACT scores have consistently exceeded State and National averages even though some students who take the ACT test do not enroll in college and have low scores.

The primary reason for these consistently high averages, of course, is the result of each individual student's accomplishments on the test. However, supplementing these strong individual efforts is a comprehensive, systematic, on-going program to assertively help students register and prepare for the test.

All-to-often in smaller schools - and in some larger ones - testing announcements, especially standardized tests, are routinely made with no assertive action by the school counselors to "reach out" to students with encouragement and practical, individual assistance. THIS IS A BIG MISTAKE! The ACT test is more than a "test." It is a "Comprehensive Guidance Tool" and should be given a high priority. Second only to personal counseling and working with severe, chronic student problems, should be assisting students with their future plans in an effective, efficient manner.

Over the past 12 years, 60% of the Halstead High School graduates chose to further their formal education. (40% chose traditional four-year schools while 20% chose 2 year colleges, vocational schools or specialized schools) Over this same time period, graduates have maintained an 85% successful completion rate in their programs. This is perhaps the strongest evidence that the students have made good choices regarding their futures while in high school.

During this 12 year time span an average of 63% of the Seniors took the ACT test. Percentages range from 43 to 74). All of these figures have been achieved in a small, rural comprehensive high school which seeks to meet the diverse needs of each student who enrolls.

The following program has been evolving since 1974 and is systematically evaluated each year with modifications made as needed. It is a comprehensive, assertive approach developed in order to obtain maximum benefits for individual students from the ACT testing program and its related components.

RC015566

August	Plans for the implimentation of the ACT program submitted to the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education.
	Mailing to parents of ALL SENIORS outlining key aspects and dates for the Senior year including dates, places of administration and costs of the ACT tests. Emphasis is on taking the ACT test during the first two administrations.
September	Dissemination of key ACT information regarding the tests, sample questions and procedures to ALL high school faculty.
	Group guidance meeting with ALL SENIORS to discuss the ACT test, pass out registration packets, encourage participation, and answer questions.
	Individual conferences with each Senior which includes discussion of the ACT registration.
	Provisions made for testing of the Special Education students, if necessary.
	A second mailing to parents of ALL Seniors to highlight the key points of the Senior GROUP GUIDANCE MEETING.
	Daily and weekly bulletin reminders to Seniors regarding registration, forming of car pools for the first and second administration dates and dissemination of more sample questions as needed to faculty and students.
October	Attend the regional ACT conference for updating on information.
	FIRST ACT TEST ADMINISTRATION
November	Emphasize the second administration date for those Seniors who missed the initial administration.
	Individual conferences with each student who took the October test when the results come in.
	Mailing of a second copy of each student's scores home with a cover letter encouraging an individual parent conference.
December	SECOND ACT TEST ADMINISTRATION
January	Individual student interpretation, mailing of test scores to parents and encouragement of the use of results in each student's individual career plans.

February	Individual conferences with Seniors who have not previously taken the ACT test and those who choose to retake the test.
March	Mailing to the parents of ALL JUNIORS encouraging them to have their students register for the April ACT test administration. This allows for counselor interpretation prior to the end of the academic year. Those choosing the June administration date may also have an individual conference, however, this is more difficult during the summer months.
	Group guidance session with ALL Juniors and distribution of registration packets.
	Individual conferences with students and parents as necessary to prepare for the test.
	Notes to faculty to remind them of specific ways to be of help to Juniors planning to take the ACT test. This enlists the support of the faculty in the program.
April	APRIL TEST ADMINISTRATION
May	Individual student interpretation conferences with students, mailing of scores to parents and the added bonus of being able to use Junior test results for enrollment purposes for the Senior year at Halstead High School.
	Group summaries of scores with comparisons to State and National averages, if available, are distributed to faculty, administration, Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education and the local media.
	Orderly compling and filing of individual and group score reports for future reference.
	Follow-up sessions are held with students to determine how the program might be improved for the next year.

Halstead High School does not attempt to "screen" students for the ACT test nor deny any student the opportunity for testing. Rather, they see their role as one of assertive registration, individual and group assistance and enlisting faculty, staff and parent support for each student to perform as well as possible on the test.

It is felt that students who have self-knowledge, career information and guidance in the use of this information will make better career choices for themselves - resulting in increased personal satisfaction and greater contributions to the betterment of society.

Some students have scores as low as "01" on a subtest, but this does not diminish the "Guidance value" of the ACT test.

Halstead High School further believes that high school students are not "finished products." No student is ever discouraged from pursuing a career. However, often realistic interpretation of factual data results in students making more realistic and attainable career goals. Low test scores may be the result of: lack of motivation, a reading problem, improper administration, not following directions, carelessness, or not following instructions. Several students have performed poorly on their initial taking of the ACT test, only to improve dramatically on subsequent testing and go on to be successful in their chosen educational program and later in their careers.

Dr. Allen McCune has been Counselor with the Halstead Public Schools since 1974, also teaching at Wichita (Kansas) State University. He has published 25 articles on "Gifted Education, Counseling, Career Education" and "Educational Leadership. Dr. McCune has been a Counselorwith student from pre-school through graduate school since 1964.

Halstead High School
Halstead, Kansas 67056
(913) 835-2682

December, 1985